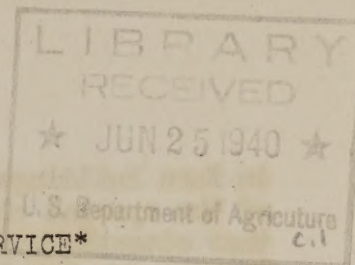


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USING THE NORTHEASTERN FARM BUILDING PLAN SERVICE*

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Why have a plan service? This may seem to be an unnecessary question. We already have one. Presumably it was established for good reasons and those reasons were developed before the service was organized. But a look back often is helpful in choosing the forward path. I believe that to be true in the present instance.

If the plan service has a proper place in the agricultural extension program, where and how does it fit in? Let us look at the whole extension program. It could be classified in many ways. One very simple way would divide all the activities into two groups. They would be classed either as education or service. The plan service is definitely a "service." It "serves" more than it "educates."

Why have we, an organization established primarily to educate, chosen another method? We obviously thought it to be better. Why? If we were to debate the question of Education vs. Service as Applied to Agricultural Extension in General we might argue for education on the grounds that it is: (1) Cheaper; (2) that it gives to the farmer new mental resources that he can apply to new problems and that he can use to extend his knowledge further.

How do these arguments apply to the farm buildings problem? First, is education cheaper? This argues that it is cheaper to educate a group of people than it is to serve them individually. It implies that there exists in a community a group interested in the same kind of farm buildings problem at the same time. This is seldom the case. In a single community a new dairy barn or a new poultry house may be built only once in a decade. Thus the prime requisite for education--a community of interest--is absent and it may become more expensive to educate one, or a few, than it is to serve them.

What of the second argument? Granting that in many cases it is more expensive to educate in farm buildings than to serve, should we still prefer education to service because education is better for the farmer? Here we need to consider the probable success of our educational program. We need to recognize that farm buildings design is a highly specialized and complex field for the understanding of which many farmers are poorly prepared by past training and interests; that generalizations

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in farm buildings problems frequently are difficult or dangerous because of the special circumstances that are peculiar to the individual case; that education, to be successful, depends on arousing interest, and that farmers are likely to be interested in the thing they are doing today rather than the thing they may do 10 years hence (and for most farmers the construction of a building is not an immediate problem); that farm buildings problems generally require the application of many principles, the omission or improper evaluation of only one of which may be unfortunate; that, once a building is up, adjustments often can be introduced only with difficulty and expense. This contrasts sharply with a question such as the feeding of dairy cattle. Here the knowledge can be acquired and tested progressively, and adjustments can be made from day to day.

Thinking of this sort leads to the conclusion that farm building design is a job for the technician and that in most cases the farmers' interest is best served by having available comprehensive plans that have been expertly prepared and thoroughly tested. It explains the need for a plan service and suggests: (1) The need for one of high quality; (2) a responsibility (and right) on the part of the extension engineer to give all proper encouragement to its use.

Our Northeast Plan Service has been in operation for about 2 years, long enough to indicate how successfully these responsibilities have been discharged. What of the first--that of providing a service of high quality? With due modesty I think we can say that this responsibility, on the whole, has been met. We have a good plan service.

Has our second responsibility been met successfully--has use of the service been properly and successfully encouraged? A partial answer lies in the use that the service has had. How much is it used? In Connecticut during the past 2 years we have supplied a total of 69 plans (see table p. 3).

Does this represent a satisfactory number? To answer this question definitely, we would need to compare the number of farm buildings constructed in Connecticut during the past 2 years on which the use of our plans would have been desirable with the number of plans distributed. This information is not available. However, if we consider the number of commercial farms in Connecticut, 10,907 commercial farms,^{1/} we might suspect that the plan service could have enjoyed a wider use. Another indication in this direction is the demand for plans (or lack of it) that

^{1/} The true number of farms in Connecticut is in doubt. The 1935 census reports 32,157. This includes all farms on which agricultural produce greater than \$250 annually was grown. Davis (See Conn. Agr. Expt. Sta. Bull. 213, Types of Farming and Types of Farming Areas in Connecticut.) suggests 25,302 as a more reliable figure. The total 10,907, of commercial farms includes only those on which the number of man-work-units exceeded 149.

followed the 1938 hurricane. The number of Connecticut dairy barns completely destroyed in this storm was estimated at 250. Presumably most of these barns have been rebuilt by this time. Our plan service probably is strongest in this field, yet there was no apparent increase in demand for barn plans (16 plans were distributed in 1938, 14 in 1939).

Analysis of Plans Requested*

Connecticut - February 27, 1940

<u>Plans</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1939</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>Total</u>
Milkhouse - - - - -	3	3	--	6
Farmhouses- - - - -	1	4	--	5
Machinery shed- - - - -	2	1	--	3
General barn plans- - - -	16	14	1	31
Horse stall details - - -	1	--	--	1
Outdoor fireplace and picnic table- - - - -	4	--	--	4
Cattle shed - - - - -	2	1	--	3
Tourist cabin- - - - -	1	1	--	2
Laying house- - - - -	2	1	1	4
Garage- - - - -	1	--	--	1
Incinerator - - - - -	--	3	--	3
Trash burner- - - - -	--	1	--	1
Manure pit- - - - -	--	1	--	1
2-car garage- - - - -	--	1	--	1
1-car garage- - - - -	--	1	1	2
Smokehouse- - - - -	--	1	--	1
Total- - - - -	33	33	3	69

If these statements suggest that greater use should have been made of the plan service, we need to examine the reasons for lack of use. How might its use be encouraged? Two methods seem likely: (1) The value of the plan service needs to be understood by other specialists and by county workers. These people should be interested in its success and alert to opportunities for recommending its use; (2) an adequate program of publicity should be conducted.

Our inference in Connecticut is that both of these methods should receive further attention. Our experience suggests for this meeting an exchange of ideas on methods. A further suggestion is that any revision of the plan service consider the cooperative development of suitable publicity aids.

* This represents approximately the total for 2 years' use. The plan service was started in the early spring of 1938.

If these methods for extending the use of the plan service are successfully undertaken, how complete can we expect our influence in farm buildings construction to be? Certainly we cannot expect to supply plans to all who build. There are some who will employ an architect. There are others who will build without plans despite any amount of urging. Also we must recognize the existence of many private plan services operated by materials and equipment agencies. Some of these services are good---perhaps in some cases better and more complete than our own can be.

The fact that some of the private plan agencies offer free plan services---for example, dairy equipment companies often prepare free, complete working drawings for individuals---raises a question concerning the operation of our own service. In Connecticut plans from the University have not been free, but have been charged for at a rate sufficient to pay the cost of printing and mailing. These costs are not high, and it frequently is said that they are so small when compared with the cost of the completed building that a charge for plans should not adversely affect their use. Yet in competition with free private plan services supplemented with extensive advertising campaigns, even a small charge may be a serious obstacle.

The question of charges for plans needs discussion.

Some may say that if private plan services are good and we find it difficult to compete with them, why not retire and leave the field to them? In answer we may say that this attitude is contrary to accepted ideas concerning agricultural extension. It could be applied with equal logic to fertilizers, dairy feeds, or milk marketing. Further, farm buildings design is not static but developmental in character. The United States Department of Agriculture and State college engineers are making significant contributions to this development which should be carried to farmers as effectively and quickly as possible. We should foster the plan service if only to keep open this channel for the introduction of new developments. One might object here that to rely on the plan service alone may slow up the general acceptance of new ideas. It reaches individuals and, consequently, the spread of influence is slow. We may reply that the plan service does not displace but supplements other methods. Further, it may be said that one first-class farm building is about as good an example of the demonstration method that we can find, and may constitute a silent but most effective device for teaching.

In conclusion:

1. We want to endorse the farm buildings plan service as the most effective medium for extension work in farm buildings. We believe that we have a good one. We want to see it grow and improve.

2. Adequate use of the plan service depends on educating our fellow extension workers and providing suitable publicity for the service. A discussion of these problems at this meeting is in order. The development

cooperatively of publicity aids when the plan service is revised should be considered.

3. Charges for plans need to be discussed, especially with regard to the relation of those charges to competition with free private plan services.

